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Remarks of Chairwoman Barbara A. Mikulski

July 25, 2013 Full Committee Markup

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee, focused on the importance of funding programs that advance America's interests abroad and ensure our markets at home operate fairly at today's Full Committee markup of the fiscal year 2014 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs and Financial Services and General Government bills. The following are Chairwoman Mikulski's remarks, as prepared for delivery:

"I am pleased to hold this meeting to mark up the fiscal year 2014 bills for the State and Foreign Operations bill and the Financial Services and General Government bill. The Financial Services bill ensures our markets operate fairly, protect consumers from unfair practices and products, and promote jobs. And the State and Foreign Operations bill supports America's leadership around the globe, and advances our interests abroad; security, humanitarian, and economic.

"As we mark up these two bills today, the Transportation-Housing bill is on the Senate floor. I'm so proud of the bipartisan vote of 73-26 that allowed us to proceed to the bill. That vote was a symbol of our shared desire to break through gridlock and to get to work for the American people. By marking up our 9th and 10th appropriations bills today, our Committee continues to show we are able to work together in a bipartisan way to move our bills forward in order to move America forward. The cooperation and collegiality within this Committee, and our willingness to really listen to each other, gives me optimism that we can and we will work together to overcome our budget impasse.

"The Financial Services Bill is so important to protecting consumers from unfair practices and unsafe products. I'm proud of the bipartisan work of Senator Udall and Senator Johanns, our newest Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Member. Their bill funds so many important consumer protection agencies. These agencies work to keep our markets honest and fair in order to ensure that Americans are not victims of scams or schemes. They fight scammers aiming to defraud Americans of their hard earned savings or harm them with unsafe products. This bill creates and sustains jobs through the Small Business Administration and the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund.

"I want to thank the Subcommittee for including my suggestions for common-sense reforms to protect small businesses from becoming victims of tax theft. I generated these reforms because small businesses in Maryland were scammed by fraudulent payroll services that took tax money from the small businesses, changed their addresses with the IRS, then took the tax money and ran -- leaving the businesses with unknown, outstanding, and substantial liabilities to the IRS.

"When I looked into this problem I found it's not just a Maryland problem. Scammers work all over the country to defraud honest small businesses. My reforms are simple and straightforward, and cut through the red-tape to make sure businesses that have been scammed by fraudulent tax preparers are not doubly victimized by the IRS. My reforms require the IRS to notify businesses when their tax preparer tries to change their business address with the IRS, and requires the IRS to do more to help victims of tax fraud work out settlements. I thank Senators Udall and Johanns for working with me on these reforms.

"I'm not just the Chairwoman of the Appropriations Committee. I'm the Senator for Maryland. There are 130,000 civil servants living in Maryland and they're facing furloughs, hiring freezes, downsizing, and outsourcing. They are on the front lines every day working hard for America at agencies such as NIH, FDA, Social Security, Goddard Space Flight Center, and NOAA. They keep our country safe, care for our veterans, make sure the promise of Social Security is fulfilled, and keep our democracy great. I am not against privatization when it's based on thoughtful consideration, but I am against arbitrary quotas and stacking the deck against federal employees. That's why I'm proud that the Financial Services bill makes smart reforms to personnel policies, and prevents arbitrary quotas or stacking the deck against federal employees in the contracting process.

"I'm proud of the work done by Senators Leahy and Graham on the State and Foreign Operations bill. This is the bill that funds America's public diplomacy and that protects American interests around the globe. So much important work is done through this bill: it gives assistance to our allies; keeps our embassies safe; provides lifesaving vaccines and nutrition assistance; fights despicable human trafficking; and, it protects religious freedoms around the world. The Foreign Operations Bill shows the rest of the world what America stands for and what America stands up for.

"This bill provides critical funding for embassy security to ensure the safety of all the people who work in our embassies and our diplomatic posts around the globe -- the men and women in our diplomatic corps who risk their lives in the line of duty as they represent our country's values and interests. This bill supports them not just with words, but with deeds, by ensuring our embassies and diplomatic posts are protected.

"Maryland is home to many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) devoted to humanitarian assistance around the globe, including such organizations as Catholic Charities and World Relief. I'm so proud of the work that they do saving innocent lives and promoting democracy abroad. The State and Foreign Operations bill provides robust support for global health and humanitarian efforts, so the spirit of America, our spirit of reaching out to help others, can extend beyond our shores.

"I believe we must focus on reducing the public debt in a balanced way. But if that's all we do then we risk creating other deficits, such as deficits in the areas of protecting Americans from unfair practices and unsafe products, or deficits in putting our words into deeds to save lives and support democracy around the globe. I believe the bills we will approve today, the State and Foreign Operations bill and the Financial Services and General Government bill, strike the right balance in our challenging budget equation, and I look forward to moving them to the full Senate."

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